

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

1. – 10. (Canceled)

11. (Currently amended) A ~~n-exopolysaccharide~~fermentation broth obtained ~~produced by a process comprising:~~

culturing a *Sphingomonas* bacteria selected from the group consisting of ATCC PTA-3487, ATCC PTA-3486, ATCC PTA-3485, ATCC PTA-3488, and mixtures thereof ~~in a fermentation broth~~ for a time and temperature effective for providing a broth from which a sphingan exopolysaccharide in a slime form can be recovered; and

~~recovering the sphingan exopolysaccharide from the fermentation broth with an alcohol precipitation method at a temperature of about 25°C to about 50°C,~~

wherein the method ~~is effective for providing~~yields at least about 10 grams of sphingan exopolysaccharide per liter of broth.

12. (Currently amended) A ~~exopolysaccharide~~fermentation broth according to claim 11 wherein fermentation is conducted from about 48 to about 96 hours at a temperature of about 25°C to about 35°C.

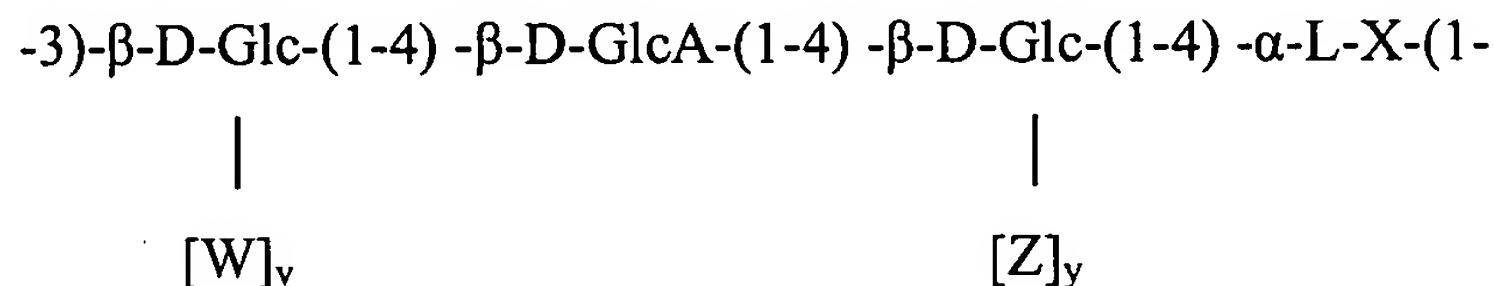
13. (Currently amended) A ~~fermentation broth~~n-exopolysaccharide according to claim 11 wherein in the alcohol precipitation method from about 1 to about 1.5 volumes of alcohol are added to the fermentation broth.

14. (Canceled)

15. (Currently amended) A fermentation broth comprising slime-forming *Sphingomonas* bacterial cells and an exopolysaccharide in a slime form, wherein the exopolysaccharide is produced by a *Sphingomonas* bacterican be recovered from said fermentation broth by alcohol precipitation at a temperature of about 25°C to about 50°C to yield at least about 10 grams of exopolysaccharide per liter of broth.

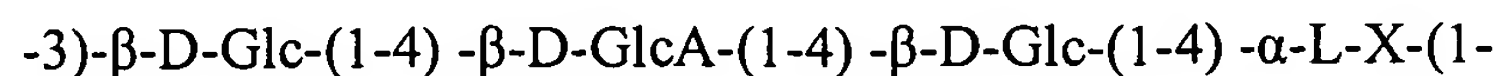
16. (Currently amended) An exopolysaccharide in a slime form fermentation broth according to claim 15 wherein the exopolysaccharide in slime form is produced by *Sphingomonas* is selected from the group consisting of ATCC PTA-3487, ATCC PTA-3486, ATCC PTA-3485, ATCC PTA-3488, and mixtures thereof.

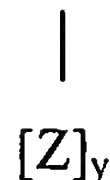
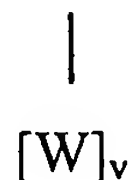
17. (Currently amended) A fermentation broth ~~exopolysaccharide in a slime form~~ according to claim 15 wherein the exopolysaccharide in slime form is a sphingan exopolysaccharide having the general formula



wherein Glc is glucose, GlcA is glucuronic acid or 2-deoxy-glucuronic acid, Rha is rhamnose, Man is mannose, X is Rha or Man, Z is attached to Glc residue 2 and is  $\alpha$ -L-Rha-(1-4)- $\alpha$ -L-Rha,  $\alpha$ -L-Man or  $\alpha$ -L-Rha, W is attached to Glc residue number 1 and is  $\beta$ -D-Glc-(1-6)- $\alpha$ -D-Glc,  $\beta$ -D-Glc-(1-6)- $\beta$ -D-Glc or  $\alpha$ -L-Rha, subscripts v and y are 0, 0.33, 0.5, 0.67 or 1.

18. (Currently amended) A fermentation broth comprising slime-forming *Sphingomonas* bacterial cells and an exopolysaccharide in a slime form having the general formula





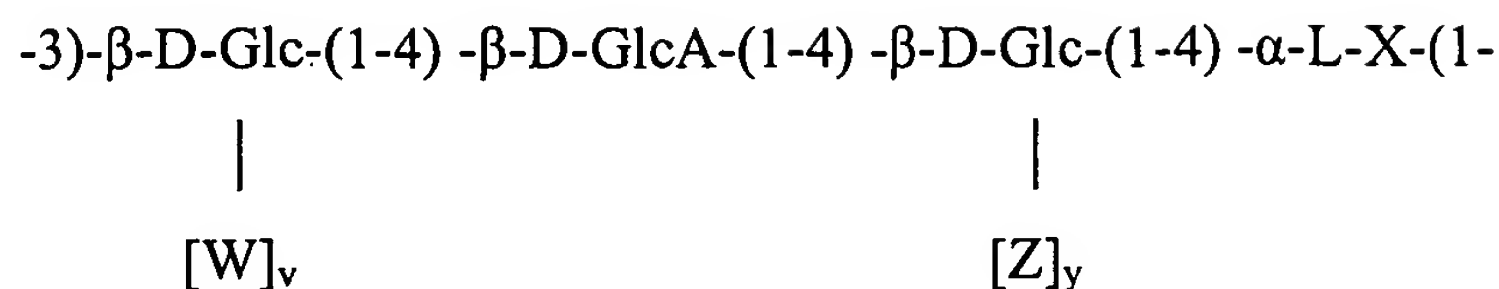
wherein Glc is glucose, GlcA is glucuronic acid or 2-deoxy-glucuronic acid, Rha is rhamnose, Man is mannose, X is Rha or Man, Z is attached to Glc residue 2 and is  $\alpha$ -L-Rha-(1-4)- $\alpha$ -L-Rha,  $\alpha$ -L-Man or  $\alpha$ -L-Rha, W is attached to Glc residue number 1 and is  $\beta$ -D-Glc-(1-6)- $\alpha$ -D-Glc,  $\beta$ -D-Glc-(1-6)- $\beta$ -D-Glc or  $\alpha$ -L-Rha, subscripts v and y are 0, 0.33, 0.5, 0.67 or 1, and wherein the fermentation broth has at least about 1% w/v exopolysaccharide and a viscosity of not more than about 25,000 cp.

19. (Currently amended) ~~An exopolysaccharide in a slime form~~ fermentation broth according to claim 18 wherein the ~~exopolysaccharide in slime form is produced by~~ *Sphingomonas* is selected from the group consisting of ATCC PTA-3487, ATCC PTA-3486, ATCC PTA-3485, ATCC PTA-3488, and mixtures thereof.

20. (Currently amended) A fermentation broth comprising slime-forming *Sphingomonas* bacteria and an exopolysaccharide in a slime form produced by ~~a the~~ *Sphingomonas* bacteria, wherein the *Sphingomonas* bacteria are grown in a submerged, aerated liquid culture, and wherein a concentration of dissolved oxygen exceeds about 5% of saturation of water after 24 hours of culturing.

21. (Currently amended) ~~A n-exopolysaccharide in a slime form~~ fermentation broth according to claim 20 wherein the exopolysaccharide in slime form is produced by *Sphingomonas* selected from the group consisting of ATCC PTA-3487, ATCC PTA-3486, ATCC PTA-3485, ATCC PTA-3488, and mixtures thereof.

22. (Currently amended) ~~An exopolysaccharide in a slime form~~ fermentation broth according to claim 21 wherein the exopolysaccharide in slime form is a sphingan exopolysaccharide having the general formula



wherein Glc is glucose, GlcA is glucuronic acid or 2-deoxy-glucuronic acid, Rha is Rhamnose, Man is mannose, X is Rha or Man, Z is attached to Glc residue 2 and is  $\alpha\text{-L-Rha-(1-4)-}\alpha\text{-L-Rha}$ ,  $\alpha\text{-L-Man}$  or  $\alpha\text{-L-Rha}$ , W is attached to Glc residue number 1 and is  $\beta\text{-D-Glc-(1-6)-}\alpha\text{-D-Glc}$ ,  $\beta\text{-D-Glc-(1-6)-}\beta\text{-D-Glc}$  or  $\alpha\text{-L-Rha}$ , subscripts v and y are 0, 0.33, 0.5, 0.67 or 1.

23. (Currently amended) The fermentation broth of claim 15 wherein the exopolysaccharide of claim 15 is selected from the group consisting of gellan, welan, rhamsan, S-88, S-7, S-198, NW-11 and S-657.

24. (Currently amended) The fermentation broth exopolysaccharide of claim 23 wherein the exopolysaccharide is selected from the group consisting of gellan, welan, S-7 and S-88.

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